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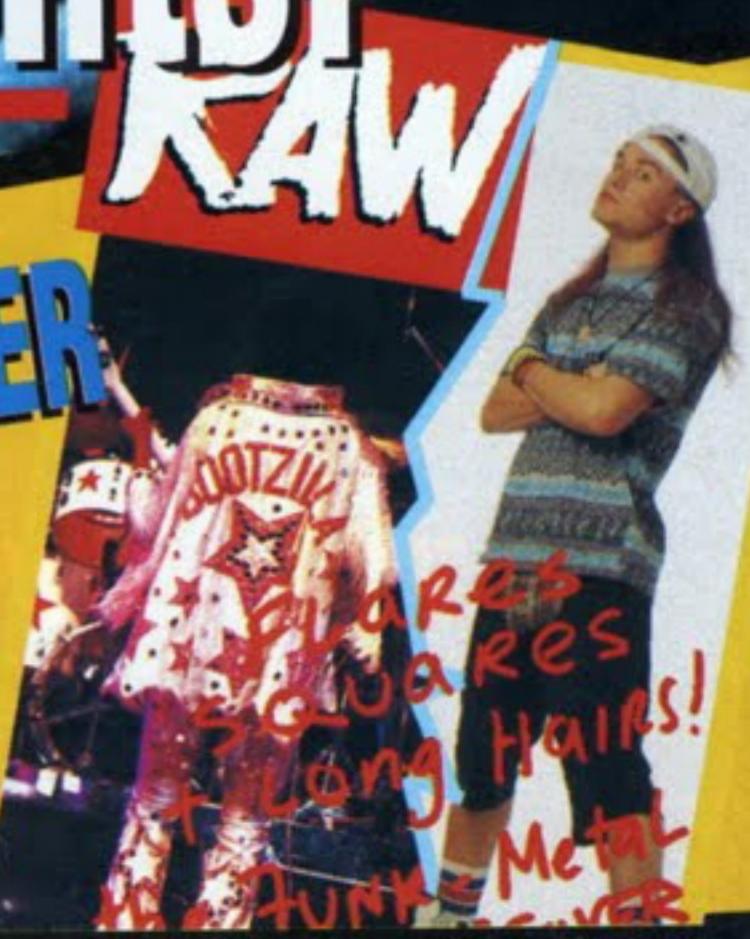
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KISS

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RAW

KISS

REGRETS? I'VE HAD A FEW. . .

"It's my fault if any KISS fan has been disappointed with what we've done in the last ten years," confesses bassist GENE SIMMONS. "I've never been dishonest with the fans but sometimes plain stupidity and riches get in the way. I've wanted to be a movie star and own a record company, but I was wrong. Now there's just Kiss." As 'God Gave Rock 'N' Roll To You II' climbs the charts, MAURA SUTTON examines the band's back catalogue, while DAVE LING gets more frank quotes from the God Of Thunder...



KISS

(Casablanca, 1974)

LOVE OR loathe 'em, few can deny that the first Kiss album was a milestone in the history (or Kisstory!) of Metal. By mid-'73 the four original members of Kiss (bassist/vocalist Gene Simmons, guitarist/vocalist Paul Stanley, guitarist Ace Frehley and drummer Peter Criss) were earning quite a reputation on the tough New York live circuit.

Influenced by the Glam scene created by the likes of Alice Cooper, David Bowie and the New York Dolls, the New Yorkers were already heavily into make-up and theatrics. The sleeve of 'Kiss' features the band sporting crude prototypes of their legendary characterisations. Frehley, the silver-daubed Space Man; Simmons, the hideous bat-faced Demon; Criss, the demure pussy Cat and Stanley, the Star and red-lipped Lover. It was recorded in a month during October '73 with producers Kenny Kerner and Richie Wise and despite sounding somewhat raw and naïve the early portents of future greatness are easily discernable. 'Strutter' is still an exciting opening track, whilst 'Cold Gin', 'Firehouse', 'Deuce' and 'Black Diamond' have long been regarded as classics. ***

GENE SAYS: "You remember the movie 2001 where the apes see and touch the monolith for the first time? They touch it and get pushed along the evolutionary ladder? That's what the first record was like; like being a virgin one moment and fucking the next! We'd been together for about eight months when we recorded it and although it was done on a 16-track desk a lot of the material still holds up." ***

HOTTER THAN HELL

(Casablanca, 1974)

THE FOLLOW-up was again produced by Kerner and Wise. The cover artwork is garrish to say the least, with bizarre photos on the back which feature Paul snogging some woman on a bed, Peter lording it over a naked woman with a star covering her nipple, Gene breathing fire and Ace looking characteristically out of it.

Best known for the title track, 'Let Me Go Rock 'N' Roll' and 'Parasite' (subsequently covered by Anthrax), 'Hotter Than Hell' also saw Kiss attempting to diversify with tracks such as 'Going Blind' (a Psychedelic ballad) and 'Mainline' which features Criss on lead vocals sounding uncannily like Rod Stewart. As with the debut, 'Hotter... didn't set the world on fire sales-wise (aside from Japan). Kiss continued to tour undaunted, and dreamt about playing Madison Square Garden. ***

GENE SAYS: "It was done during our very first tour. We were supporting people like Rory Gallagher, Wishbone Ash and Argent, who did the original version of 'God Gave Rock 'N' Roll To You II'! In retrospect it was better recorded than the debut, but the material wasn't as good." ***

DRESSED TO KILL

(Casablanca, 1975)

KISS WERE still supporting the likes of Iggy Pop and Blue Oyster Cult but the theatrics were getting more outrageous by the minute, Gene igniting his hair during his fire-breathing interlude! An air of mystique developed as they refused to appear in public without their masks.

But contrary to the views of some critics the quartet were devoting as much attention to developing their music as their image. 'Dressed To Kill' showed that Simmons and Stanley were becoming expert at writing snappy, catchy, Rock 'n' Roll. 'Room Service' and 'C'Mon And Love Me' (recently covered by Skid Row) are two examples from the Stanley pen whilst Simmons' dark, brooding 'She' further established his sinister Demon persona. But despite a wealth of riches, 'Dressed To Kill' has come to be known primarily as the album that features 'Rock And Roll All Nite'. ***



Gene Simmons: 'Who wants to be a movie star? I don't!' MICHAEL JOHANSSON

GENE SAYS: "It was the first record we had a hand in production-wise and, of course, the first time 'Rock And Roll All Nite' appeared. I'd written a song that compared a car and a girl, mentioning sticking the key in the ignition and the twin headlights. Paul just added the chorus." ***



ALIVE!

(Casablanca, 1975)

COMMENCING WITH the words "You wanted the best and you got it, the hottest band in the land, KISSSS!", 'Alive!' is the

definitive live Rock 'n' Roll record.

After three studio albums and endless touring the band were massively in debt, and were only saved from sinking into obscurity (can you imagine!) by capturing their legendary live show on vinyl.

Recorded primarily at Detroit's Cobo Hall, 'Alive!' conveys the spine-tingling atmosphere of a full-throttle theatrical Rock show. Frehley solos and riffs like the maniac he truly is, whilst Stanley's extended raps ("HOW MANY PEOPLE HERE TONIGHT BELIEVE IN RAWK AND ROLL??!!") have been copied many times, but seldom equalled. Could've done without Criss's interminable solo though!

Within two months 'Alive!' was certified Gold in America and the live version of 'Rock And Roll All Nite' was a hit single, amazingly their first. Kissteria had arrived. ***

GENE SAYS: "One of our better records. We'd always felt confined in the studio. Business-wise, 'Alive!' saved our asses, we were losing fortunes each year. On our very

first tour we had a levitating drum kit! We'd be supporting Wishbone Ash and they'd be concentrating on their notes while we'd be breathing fire and blowing up the stage!"



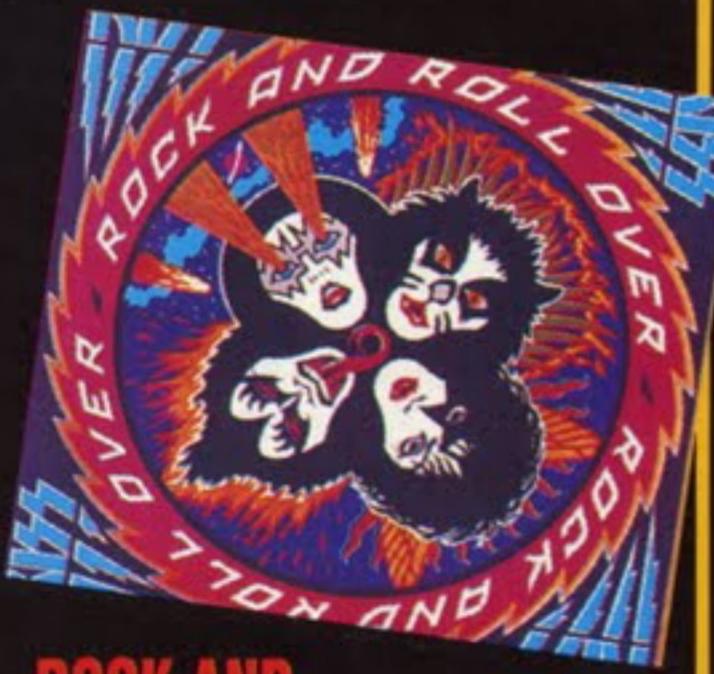
DESTROYER

(Casablanca, 1976)

WITH 'ALIVE!' going Platinum, Kiss could do whatever they damn well pleased on the follow-up, which is exactly what they did! Choirs and orchestras, anyone?!

'Destroyer' has everything but the kitchen sink. Produced by Bob Ezrin who had previously worked with Alice Cooper, 'Destroyer' is as grandiose and experimental as the first three albums were plain and simple. Ezrin also helped out with the songwriting, as did LA sycophant Kim Fowley, contributing 'King Of The Night Time World' and 'Flaming Youth'. 'God Of Thunder' was to become another stage favourite, providing the setting for Gene's blood-vomiting party piece, whilst 'Do You Love Me' has Paul fully, um, fleshing out his role as The Lover! Overall, 'Detroit Rock City' is probably the most popular cut with Kiss fans, yet Peter Criss's unlikely ballad 'Beth' was the biggest hit. ****

GENE SAYS: "‘Destroyer’ had its faults but it was an evolutionary album. The older songs were Slade and Chuck Berry-influenced, but ‘Detroit Rock City’ and ‘God Of Thunder’ had nothing to do with that. A huge leap forward." *****



ROCK AND ROLL OVER

(Casablanca, 1976)

KISS DECIDED to re-capture the rough 'n' ready 'almost live' atmosphere of the early albums and hired a disused theatre (The Star Theatre in Nanuet, New York) to capture the all-important live vibe.



Kiss circa 1980 (l-r): Gene Simmons, Ace Frehley and Paul Stanley

The songs are short, sharp and snappy, although some are far from essential listening, sounding a little dated. However, it's not all bad news, as tracks such as 'Makin' Love', 'Take Me' and 'Calling Dr. Love' still sound pretty good. 'Rock And Roll Over' was the first Kiss album to go Gold on the day of release and the subsequent live dates saw them finally returning to New York to headline Madison Square Garden. ***

GENE SAYS: "We were concerned that we'd taken things too far with the choirs and orchestras on 'Beth', so we decided just to be a straight ahead spiv Rock 'n' Roll band." ***

LOVE GUN

(Casablanca, 1977)

'LOVE GUN' was recorded at the height of Kissteria, as the boys started to appear on more merchandise than Bart Simpson. Kiss lunch-boxes, Kiss dolls, Kiss make-up kits... you name it!

To underline the fact, 'Love Gun' was certified Platinum on advance orders alone before it was even finished! Thankfully, the content lives up to the hysteria, being a cross between the technological wizardry of 'Destroyer' and the raw feel of 'Rock And Roll Over'. Classic tracks abound, with the title track, 'Christeen Sixteen' and the steamy 'I Stole Your Love' standing out. 'Shock Me' is the first Kiss song to feature Ace on lead vocal whilst 'Plaster Caster' is Gene's typically lewd homage to a bunch of LA groupies notorious for making statues out of male Rock stars' naughty bits! ****

GENE SAYS: "A sister record to 'Rock And Roll Over'. Most of the demos were done on the road. 'Christeen Sixteen' was written



when
Paul and I started making fun of
each other's songwriting! He accused me of
writing songs about girls all the time and
joked 'Your next one'll probably
be called 'Christeen
Sixteen'!', so
it was! I
like

the spoken part in the middle, we were
concerned it'd sound like a dirty old man
but we left it in!" ****

ALIVE II

(Casablanca, 1977)

ANOTHER DOUBLE album, this time three sides live with one of



Gene: Nice T-shirt, mate!

new studio material. 'Alive II' was recorded at the LA Forum and suffers inevitably from comparisons with 'Alive!'. Worth buying for the breathtaking inner-gatefold sleeve alone, this is a worthy representation of Kiss at the height of their fame.

The five studio tracks are most notable for the fact that Bob (brother of Bruce) Kulick is often rumoured to have played guitar on them, replacing the usually out-of-it Ace. 'All American Man' is possibly the best of the five, featuring a typically chest-beating vocal from Stanley. The cover of 'Any Way You Want It' is horrible! Still, the live tracks were good enough to ensure that the album reached number one in the US in January 1978. ***

GENE SAYS: "Not as good as 'Alive!'. We didn't want to repeat what we'd already done so we threw in some studio material.

And no, Ace didn't play on the studio songs, Bob played on three of 'em and Rick Derringer played on another. Ace had started to be out of it by 'Destroyer' - in fact, he didn't play all the solos on that album either! Dick Wagner did the one on 'Sweet Pain'. ****

DOUBLE PLATINUM

(*Casablanca*, 1978)

'...PLATINUM' represents the end of the second phase of Kisstory. Featuring just one unreleased track, a new recording of 'Strutter', '...Platinum' is basically a greatest hits package. Hardly essential for the die-hard Kiss fan, but a good introduction for the uninitiated. ***

GENE SAYS: "We'd done this silly film called *Kiss Meets The Phantom* and our record sales exploded so the record company wanted to put it out. We demanded to at least re-mix everything."

**

PAUL STANLEY

(*Casablanca*, 1978)

ONE ALBUM going

"On our very first tour we had a levitating drum kit! We'd be supporting Wishbone Ash and they'd be concentrating on their notes while we'd be breathing fire and blowing up the stage!"

GENE SIMMONS

Platinum on the day of release is remarkable enough, but four solo albums from four members of the same band going Platinum on the same day?! Believe it or not this is exactly what happened in September '78.

All four albums were presented as a package, with each member of the band dedicating his album to the other three! Each copy also contained an interlocking poster that joined with the others to make a giant mural. Stanley's is considered to be the most Kiss-like. Indeed, the roots of much of modern day Kiss material are to be found here. It's difficult to pick highlights, but 'Tonight You Belong To Me', 'Take Me Away (Together As One)' and 'Love In Chains' are the best of an exquisite bunch.

GENE SAYS: "We knew at that point that Ace and Peter were about to crack up, they were



EBET ROBERTS

Bruce (left) and Bob Kulick: Both of these men have played on Kiss LPs!

threatening to leave, so we did solo records to give people a chance to think. Paul's was good. The songs sounded like the ones he was writing for Kiss." ***

GENE SIMMONS

(*Casablanca*, 1978)

GENE'S ALBUM is most remarkable for the astonishingly lengthy 'thank-you' list! The special guests on the



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Saturday 15th BIRKENHEAD Stairways

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Thursday 20th BIRMINGHAM Edwards

Friday 21st MILTON KEYNES Woughton

Saturday 22nd DUDLEY J.B.'s

Monday 24th SOUTHEND Esplanade

Tuesday 25th CARDIFF University





Gene tries out an alternative to his Listerine mouthwash!

record are equally impressive, and diverse. Featured backing vocalists include Cher (Gene's girlfriend at the time), Helen Reddy (!), Donna Summer (!!!) and Janis Ian (!!!), whilst Aerosmith's Joe Perry, Bob Seger and Cheap Trick's Rick Nielsen all played guitar.

Covering every conceivable musical and sexual angle, Gene's album was simply too diverse, but the likes of 'Radioactive' and 'Living In Sin' make for interesting listening. And how about that schmaltzy version of 'When You Wish Upon A Star'?! Unreal! **

GENE SAYS: "Mine was probably the most interesting of the four. I didn't want to do just another Rock 'n' Roll album." ***

PETER CRISS

(Casablanca, 1978)

PETER'S EFFORT sounds more like a wanna-be white-boy Soul trip than a Rock 'n' Roll release. A pity, 'cause the drummer's gruff 'n' gritty voice had lots of potential. Instead he preferred to waste it on light Pop such as 'You Matter To Me' and 'That's The Kind Of Sugar Papa Likes'. He was, however, astute enough to capitalise on the success of 'Beth' by including plenty of soppy ballads. *

GENE SAYS: "I didn't like it at all!" *

ACE FREHLEY

(Casablanca, 1978)

THE ONLY one to boast a hit single, a cover of Russ Ballard's 'New



York Groove', Ace's was the most Metal-orientated of the solo albums. 'Rip It Out', 'Ozone' and 'Wiped Out' feature the distinctively deadpan Ace vocal delivery, not to mention his simple but stunningly effective guitar work. There's a healthy dollop of bizarre Frehley humour too. ****

GENE SAYS: "Very on the mark. And it really surprised me because we'd been trying to force him for so long to write some songs and sing. We thought he'd be in a drunken stupor but somehow he kept his wits about him!" ***

DYNASTY

(Casablanca, 1979)

TIME TO change or die. Once again Kiss confounded the sceptics by taking a drastic left turn. They took on the Dance artists who were proclaiming the death of Rock 'n' Roll and beat them at their own game with 'I Was Made For Loving You', a pulsating, thumping and unbelievably sexy Rock-meets-Dance tune that shocked fans at the time but seems perfectly natural in the Funk/Metal-saturated '90s. Aside from being a massive hit, 'I Was Made...' bore the first co-writing credit for one Desmond Child! 'Dynasty' was a pretty impressive album considering the inner turmoil that the band were going through.

Frehley's version of the Stones' '2000 Man' is vintage Kiss, and Stanley-penned tunes like 'Sure Know Something' and 'Magic Touch' hint at the melodic approach the band would adopt on subsequent records. ****

GENE SAYS: "We tried to evolve a little, if you stick with studs and leather every year people are gonna think you're Judas Priest! It was a noble effort and it gave us our biggest worldwide hit in 'I Was Made For Loving You' - which I still don't care for! - but it is not Kiss by any means. It began a Poppier period of Kiss which lasted for about a decade." **

UNMASKED

(Mercury, 1980)

DESPITE THE title the masks remained firmly in place, though the whereabouts of Peter Criss weren't as apparent. Although he was included on the cover, rumours abounded that sessionman Anton Figg played on the album.

Whatever, Criss officially left Kiss in July '80. The exact circumstances of the split are shrouded in secrecy, despite the drummer's continual threats to publish a 'tell-all' book. Considering the peripheral complications, 'Unmasked' is another fine album, boasting three wonderfully whacky Frehley cuts ('Talk To Me', 'Torpedo Girl' and 'Two Sides Of The Coin'). Elsewhere Simmons proves that he can really sing on 'Naked City' and 'She's So European' whilst

Stanley delivers the typically excellent 'Shandi', 'Easy As It Seems' and 'What Makes The World Go Round'.

No major hits, yet it still went Platinum. Meanwhile the drumstool vacancy was filled by a young New York musician, the late Eric Carr. Eric made his debut at the Palladium in New York, sporting his Fox make-up (apparently the band wanted him to be a bird but he was having none of that!) ****

GENE SAYS: "I really don't like it!, it sunk us deeper into the Pop cesspool. We might as well have been The Archies! By that point Peter was almost an invalid and it's true that Anton played on the album. By the end of it Peter was out of the band. No stars!"

(MUSIC FROM) THE ELDER

(Casablanca, 1981)

'THE ELDER' has been much ridiculed over the years, but how many of the detractors have bothered to listen to the damn thing? And have they noticed that the ultra-hip Lou Reed actually gets co-writing credits on 'Mr. Blackwell', 'Dark Light' and 'A World Without Heroes' (which has just been covered by Gene's old flame Cher on 'Love Hurts')? Producer Bob Ezrin did his best to recreate the grandiose sound of 'Destroyer', choirs and all, and although the concept may seem pretty lame (some kid chasing a nasty, nasty man), there are



some good Rockin' tunes. ****

GENE SAYS: "I'd give it five stars for sheer balls at least because it was a brave attempt. The end result wasn't satisfying but you've got to admit we took a real chance, even if it's disappointing." *

KISS KILLERS

(Casablanca, 1982)

YET ANOTHER compilation, this time a single album offering available only in Europe. Most notable for new tracks 'I'm A Legend Tonight', 'Nowhere To Run', 'Down On My Knees' and 'Partners In Crime'. Anyone who thought Kiss were finished should have listened to these Stanley-penned gems. Interestingly enough, 'Down On My Knees' was co-written with a certain Bryan Adams! Wonder what happened to him! ***

GENE SAYS: "Again the record company wanted another greatest hits so we quickly

"If you stick with studs and leather every year people are gonna think you're Judas Priest! It was a noble effort and it gave us our biggest worldwide hit in 'I Was Made For Loving You' - which I still don't care for! - but it is not Kiss by any means."

GENE ON 'DYNASTY'

"For 'Animalise' and a couple of others I was really only there mentally. I was in movies and I believed in the American dream; that anyone could do anything. I wanted to be an actor. But Paul's contribution carried me." GENE SIMMONS

- and I mean quickly! - put together some new songs. I don't care for it but it felt good to play that harder music again." *

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

(*Casablanca, 1982*)

REGARDED BY many as the album that propelled Kiss firmly back into the bosom of the Metal community,



'Creatures Of The Night' is the heaviest sounding record that they ever recorded. Part of the credit for this goes to producers Michael James Jackson, Stanley and Simmons. The lions (or Foxes?) share of the credit must go to Eric Carr for his now legendary performance on drums. Ask any drummer and they'll tell you the same, or more simply listen to 'I Love It Loud' and try to stop your internal organs from rattling around. Impossible!

Not a duff track in sight, and many of the songs such as 'I Still Love You' and 'War Machine' became staples of the '80s Kiss live set. All was not entirely well, however, and strong rumours suggested that Ace didn't play on the record, and that he'd been replaced by one Vincent Cusano. After a promo visit to Europe Ace quit the band to embark on his own project, Frehley's Comet. Time for Vincent Cusano to become Vinnie Vincent, the guitarist with the

Egyptian-type make-up!

GENE SAYS: "We knew we wanted to make the heaviest album for our career and 'Creatures... is probably the most satisfying for me personally. It's heavy but not grungey. I wrote 'War Machine' with Bryan Adams. I'd come up with the riff on a little synthesizer - I wanted to rip off King Crimson's 'In The Court Of The Crimson King'! - but he came in and we finished it together." *****

LICK IT UP

(*Casablanca, 1983*)

VINNIE DIDN'T have to put up with the make-up for long. With 'Lick It Up' the band appeared facially naked for the first time ever, the shedding of the make-up



MICHAEL JOHANSON

The late, lamented Eric Carr who died last November



symbolising
a fresh chapter in Kisstory.

'Lick It Up' saw them perfecting a sound that'll be most familiar to modern day fans, mixing the power of 'Creatures...' with the melodic sensibilities of 'Unmasked'. Vincent seemed to be encouraging the band to write even naughtier lyrics than usual (no mean feat). The words to 'Gimme More' alone are enough to give a nun palpitations. Rightfully regarded as definitive '80s Kiss. ****

GENE SAYS: "We were on a roll and we were so confident that we decided it was time to get rid of the make-up. With Twisted Sister and Motley Crue around there were more than enough of those kind of bands around." ****

ANIMALIZE

(*Vertigo, 1984*)

MUSICAL CHAIRS again as Vinnie is, um, asked to leave. Vincent was evidently attempting to take



'I should never have had that last vindaloo curry', splutters Gene!



"'Revenge' will be the best we've ever done. There's not a weak song on it, no Chuck Berry riffs and less songs about girls. There's not a Desmond Child lick in sight. We had marksmen with bazookas posted outside the studio!"

GENE ON THE FORTHCOMING LP

control of the group. He went on to form the Vinnie Vincent Invasion, who made two rather excellent albums before vocalist Mark Slaughter and Dana Strum left to form Slaughter. 'Animalize' gave new guitarist Mark St. John (real name Norton) 15 minutes of fame, and very good he was too. Stanley provided the hit 'Heaven's On Fire' (another collaboration with Desmond Child) and produced the whole thing, but with the exception of 'Thrills In The Night' and 'Under The Gun', 'Animalize' is far from vintage Kiss. ***

GENE SAYS: "We knew who we were and what we wanted to do, but we had to get rid of Vinnie. He was very talented but we couldn't deal with his bullshit so we fired him outright. The same thing happened to the poor guy with his own band.

"For 'Animalize' and a couple of others I was really only there mentally. I was in movies and I believed in the American dream; that anyone could do anything. I wanted to be an actor. But Paul's contribution carried me." ***

ASYLUM

(Vertigo, 1985)

THE FIRST album to feature current Kiss guitarist Bruce Kulick. Bruce replaced St. John on the eve of the 'Animalize' European tour when he contracted a form of arthritis in his hand. Kulick took to his new position with gusto, delivering some particularly fine solos on 'Asylum'. Stanley excels himself yet again with 'Tears Are Falling' (a minor hit), 'Uh! All Night' and 'King Of The Mountain' yet Gene appears to be working on autosleaze with the likes of 'Secretly Cruel' and 'Anyway You Slice It'. ***

GENE SAYS: "I liked the songs but hated the cover. In many ways it was a sister record to 'Animalize'." ***

CRAZY NIGHTS

(Vertigo, 1987)

KISS WERE firing on all cylinders again. The chant-a-long title track

even reached the top four in the UK singles chart! Simmons showed that he could still thrash it out with the best of 'em on 'No, No, No,' and also donated 'Thief In The Night', a sinister little number originally written for Wendy O Williams. Stanley's track record remains sickeningly perfect as he turned in yet more classic AOR tunes aided by Desmond Child and Dianne Warren ('Reason To Live', 'Turn On The Night' etc!). Deservedly a big success. ***

GENE SAYS: "One of my least favourite, I didn't like Ron Neivison's production. The title track became a big hit for us but I still don't like it, it's too Poppy. Paul still teases me about it, but he doesn't care for 'I Love It Loud' either. Whenever we play a song that the other doesn't like onstage we go over and stick our tongues out!" **

SMASHES, THRASHES AND HITS

(Vertigo, 1988)

THE SUCCESS of 'Crazy Nights' prompted another compilation. Overall, 'Smashes...' is worthwhile, and a good starting point for fans who've just discovered them via 'God Gave Rock And Roll To You II'. Of more interest to the older

fans is the inclusion of two new tracks, '(You Make Me) Rock Hard' and 'Let's Put The X In Sex', both typically steamy Stanley songs. And let's not forget the '88 version of 'Beth' with Eric Carr re-creating Criss' weepy lead vocal! ***

GENE SAYS: "Record company again! And I really didn't like the two new songs either, they were sub-standard and Paul agreed in retrospect. We might as well have written songs called 'We're Such Studs'. Everybody knows we fuck a lot, but with those songs it became a joke."

**

HOT IN THE SHADE

(Vertigo, 1989)

THE LAST album to feature Eric Carr, who sadly died in November 1991. Ironically, it was the first LP to feature Eric singing lead vocal on one of his own compositions ('Little Ceasar'). Stanley scored another massive hit single with 'Forever' (a ballad co-written with Michael Bolton) whilst 'Hide Your Heart' (a Stanley song originally recorded by Bonnie Tyler) and the Soulful 'Silver Spoon' are as fine as anything they've recorded in recent years.

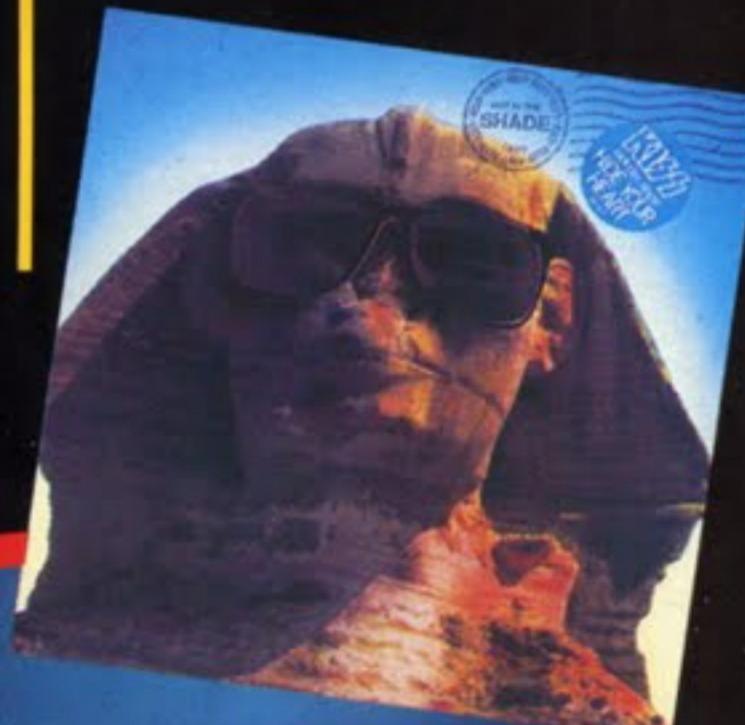
On the strength of 'HITS', not to mention current hit 'God Gave Rock And Roll To You II', the forthcoming LP album ('Revenge') should be most excellent. Can't wait!

GENE SAYS: "After 'Smashes...' we were aware that a lot of what we were doing wasn't competitive or fresh anymore. 'Hot...' saw us finding

Rare vertical shot of Ace Frehley!

ourselves again. The material was only 60 per cent there, but there were a couple of jems on there that pointed us in the right direction again.

"And I have to tell you that 'Revenge' will be the best we've ever done. There's not a weak song on it, no Chuck Berry riffs and less songs about girls. There's not a Desmond Child lick in sight. We had marksmen with bazookas posted outside the studio!" ***



ROBERT ELLIS



MICHAEL JOHANSSON